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*Dinah Allen*

A

# DISCOURSE,

Occasioned by the DEATH of

Doct<sup>r</sup> ABIJAH EVERETT,

WHO SUDDENLY DEPARTED THIS LIFE,

*JANUARY 2, 1804.*

In the 48th Year of his Age.

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By NATHANIEL EMMONS, D. D.

*PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN FRANKLIN.*

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# A FUNERAL DISCOURSE.

PSALMS LV. 22.

CAST THY BURDEN UPON THE LORD, AND HE SHALL  
SUSTAIN THEE.



EATH is one of the most fruitful sources of sorrow in this evil world. It not only carries terror and distress to the dying, but plants daggers in the breasts of the living. It has produced more tears and sincere sighs than any other calamity, which has fallen upon the children of men.

EVERY instance of mortality causes a smaller or larger circle of sorrow. The living are continually lamenting the dead, and a large portion of mankind are every where exhibiting the signals of bereavment and mourning. "Man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets." But God who does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men, is abundantly able to heal the wounds which he gives. There is always a remedy for every mourner, and this remedy is pointed out in our text. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." To set this gracious declaration in a plain and practical light,

I shall,

I. SHOW what we are to understand by burdens.

II. SHOW what is implied in men's casting their burdens upon the Lord.

III. MAKE it appear, that God will sustain those who cast their burdens upon him.

I. LET us consider what we are to understand by burdens.

A BURDEN properly signifies a load; and to carry a load is always more or less tiresome, and sometimes extremely distressing. A burden, therefore, is a very proper figure to represent any thing, which is disagreeable, painful, or afflictive. In this figurative sense, the word burden is used in the text and in various other places of scripture, as well as in common discourse. When we speak of any natural evils, which have fallen upon ourselves or others, we very commonly call them burdens. By this metaphor, we are to understand all natural evils, whether of body, or of mind. Wounds, bruises, diseases, and every species of sickness may be properly called bodily evils; but bereavements, disappointments, and all the marks of divine displeasure may more properly be termed mental evils. These two kinds of natural evil are intimately connected, and very frequently enhance each other. Pains of the body are painful to the mind, and pains of the mind are sometimes painful, and even destructive to the body. These bodily and mental evils are more in number than can be reckoned up; but many of them are so short in duration, and so easy to be borne, that we never consider them as burdens. As we hardly perceive the weight of those things that we daily carry about with us, so we scarcely take notice of the light and common evils of life. But there are severe pains and sicknesses, and severe losses and bereavements, which are properly called, burdens, and which greatly abound in this evil and sinful world. Men are here born to trouble, as the

sparks fly upward. How often are their bodies wracked with pain? How often are their eyes filled with tears? How often do their bosoms heave with sighs? How often are they called, in a sudden and unexpected manner, to part with their nearest and dearest friends? These are heavy burdens, too heavy for them to bear, without divine support and consolation. Even Job himself was ready to sink under the bereaving strokes of providence. He cried out in the anguish of his heart, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me. "When God visits any with sore and sudden bereavements, he causes their hearts to stoop, and constrains them to feel the propriety and importance of casting their burdens upon him. This leads me to show,

II. WHAT it is for the afflicted to cast their burdens upon the Lord. This implies various exercises of the mind.

1. It implies a realizing sense, that God has laid their burdens upon them. They must know the rod, and him who hath appointed it, in order to know where to cast their burdens. All afflictions come from God, and are marks of his just displeasure. Though they flow from love, yet they flow from that love which frowns upon sin. No affliction is for the present joyous, but grievous, and God does not grieve mankind to express his love of complacency. It is the expression of his displeasure, which gives the heaviest weight to the heaviest afflictions. There is nothing which is capable of giving so much anguish and distress to the human heart, as a realizing sense of the just displeasure of the greatest and best of beings. And when the afflicted realize the frowns of God under his bereaving hand, they are fully convinced of the necessity of going to him, and casting their burdens upon his arm. But,

2. THEY cannot do this, without acknowledging, that God has a right to lay their burdens upon them. God is the sove

reign Lord of all his creatures, and always has a right to lay such burdens upon them, as he sees best. He has a right to lay a burden upon one, and not upon another, and to lay a heavier burden upon one, than upon another, without assigning any reason for such a disparity in the dispensations of his providence. "He giveth not account of any of his matters ; and none may say unto him, what doest thou ? He sees thro' all the relations and connexions of things, and knows how to lay burdens upon his creatures, in the most proper time and in the most proper degree and duration. Infinite wisdom cannot err, and perfect goodness cannot injure : the judge of all the earth cannot but do right. This men must believe, in order to cast their burdens upon the Lord. For, if he should injure them by any burdens, which he lays upon them, the injury could not be removed, by any created being, not even by himself. If he should take off an unwise or unjust burden, this would not repair the injury : or if he should grant a good to the person, greater than the unjust evil he has inflicted upon him, this would not repair the injury. Were God to afflict any person more than he deserved, the person would always have reason to complain ; and while he complained he could not cast his burden upon the Lord. The afflicted, therefore, must be fully convinced, that God has a right to afflict them in the manner and in measure he actually does, before they can be disposed to cast their burdens upon him. For,

3. THIS implies entire submission to the conduct of God, or a willingness to endure the burdens, which he pleases to lay upon them. The prophet Micah speaks the proper language of one, who is suffering under the correcting hand of God. "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned ; until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me." It is the perfect rectitude of God's conduct in afflicting mankind, which is the only proper ground of their entire submission. Since God always acts wisely and justly in laying

burdens upon them, they always have reason to be submissive under his burdens, and to bear them cheerfully. So Job felt and said in the furnace of affliction. "The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away : blessed be the name of the Lord." The Shunamite felt and expressed the same spirit, under the bereaving hand of God. When she was interrogated, "Is it well with thee ? Is it well with thy husband ? Is it well with the child ?" She replied, "It is well." She was willing to bear the burden which God had laid upon her, even while she was seeking relief. And the afflicted always feel this spirit, before they cast their burdens upon the Lord. For,

4. This further implies casting themselves upon the Lord, which is the essence of the duty enjoined in the text. Men cannot lay the burdens which they feel upon God ; nor can God take to himself the burdens which he lays upon them. He can, indeed, take calamities from one person, or one people, and lay the same sort of calamities upon another person, or another people ; but he cannot take upon himself the natural evils which he inflicts upon any person, or people ; and, therefore, no person, or people can literally cast their burdens upon God. But they can cast *themselves* upon the Lord, which will afford them immediate support and relief, under their burdens. When the general of an army lays a heavy burden upon an obedient soldier, he may cast himself, and consequently his burden upon the general, by saying, "Sir, this appears a burden too heavy for me to carry. But you know what is proper to lay upon me. I am your soldier, my strength, and my life are at your disposal. It is your concern to improve my strength and my life for the public good. And if it be best, that my strength should be exhausted, or my life sacrificed, at this time, by bearing this burden, I have nothing to say ; I cheerfully submit." The soldier now casts his burden upon his general, to whom it wholly belongs, to continue, or to lighten, or to remove the burden. Just so, the child of sorrow may

go to his heavenly Father, and say, " My burden is great, and it seems I must sink under it. But thou knowest what is best. I am in thy hand, as the clay is in the hand of the potter. My strength and my life are entirely thine. It belongs to thee to do what thou wilt with thine own. If thy glory requires my strength to be exhausted, and my life to be sacrificed, by suffering affliction, not my will, but thine be done." When the afflicted feel this spirit, and thus carry themselves, with all their sorrows, to God, they do in the most becoming manner cast their burdens upon him. Thus Eli cast himself and his burdens upon the Lord. When Samuel told him what evils were coming upon him and upon his house, he said, " It is the Lord : let him do what seemeth him good." Let God glorify himself by me, either in life, or in death, and I am satisfied. In the same manner David cast his burdens upon the Lord. " Behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good to him." I refer it entirely to God, to continue, or to lighten, or to remove my burdens. Christ taught this duty to all his disciples, in a state of suffering. " Take no thought for the morrow : for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. " And in the view of his own tremendous sufferings, he cast himself and his sorrows upon his Father. " O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me : but not my will, but thine be done." The apostle Peter directs suffering christians to feel and conduct in the same manner. " Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time : *casting all your care upon him* ; for he careth for you. " And the apostle Paul not only enjoins this duty upon christians, but describes the manner of performing it. " *Be careful for nothing* : but in every thing *by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving*, let your requests be made known unto God. " When the afflicted thus go to God, and wholly resign themselves up to his care and disposal, they then cast their cares and burdens upon him, in the manner he requires.

It only remains to show,

III. What evidence there is, that he will sustain them.  
Here it may be observed,

1. There is ground to believe, that God will sustain those, who cast their burdens upon him, because he laid their burdens upon them, to show their weakness, and make them take hold of his strength. It is only, if need be, that he afflicts any of mankind, and when the afflictions he sends have answered their purpose, he is ready to relieve the afflicted. He told his ancient people, that he would afflict them, on purpose to bring them to a due sense of their dependence upon him. "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early." This end which God proposed in afflicting his people, the prophet tells us was completely answered, by bringing them to cast their burdens upon him. "Come, say they, and let us return unto the Lord: for *he* hath torn, and *he* will heal us; *he* hath smitten, and *he* will bind us up." As soon as the afflicted cast their burden upon God, he is always ready to sustain them. As soon as Peter, when sinking in the waves, lifted up his eyes and his heart to Christ, and cried for mercy, the compassionate Saviour granted him immediate support. As soon as Abraham had completely bowed his will to the will of God, and in his heart had offered up his son, God appeared for his relief, and removed his heavy burden. God is always ready to sustain the weak and distressed, when they are willing to take hold of his supporting hand. He always knows when the afflicted really desire his gracious support, and then he is always willing to sustain them, by lightening their burdens, or giving them strength according to the weight and duration of their trials.

2. Those who cast their burdens upon the Lord, are properly prepared to receive divine support and consolation. While

they carry their own burdens, they murmur and repine, which renders them incapable of deriving support from God. They refuse to be comforted. They contend with their Maker, who is stronger than they, and provoke him to continue and increase their burdens. Pharaoh was obstinate and incorrigible under divine corrections. He chose to bear his own burdens, and refused to submit to the hand that chastized him. This provoked God to increase his burdens, until they sunk him in perdition. While the afflicted feel and act like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, or a wild bull in a net, they are in a situation, which forbids God to appear for them, and puts them out of the reach of his aid and support. They cannot, at the same time, trust in themselves, and lean upon God. But when they cease to contend with the Almighty, and cast their burdens upon him; then they are suitably prepared to receive divine consolation. When they feel weak, and weary, and heavy laden, and really lean upon the Lord, they immediately find rest and peace. All the perfections of God are a ground of support to those, who cast their burdens upon him; and so long as they renounce all self-dependence, and trust in the Lord Jehovah in whom there is everlasting strength, they will feel themselves strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

3. THE glory of God requires him to support those, who look to him for strength or relief under their burdens. He always glorifies himself by displaying his perfections in supporting, relieving or defending his friends, who place their hopes and cast their burdens upon him. The scripture abounds with instances of his signal interpositions in favor of suffering saints. He appeared for Jacob, when sinking in despondency, and turned his sorrows into joys. He strengthened and animated Elijah, in a season of peculiar darkness and distress. He gave faith and fortitude to Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego, which enabled them to maintain their religion and integ-

rity, in opposition to all the power and malice of their enemies. He exerted his power and displayed his justice in favor of Daniel, and gave him a complete victory and triumph over those who sought his life. And the Apostle gives us a long catalogue of the ancient Patriarchs, whom God supported in affliction, protected in danger, and relieved in distress. In these and all other instances of the kind, God glorified himself, by sustaining and comforting those who confided in his power and goodness. His past conduct is a pledge of his future. As he always has, so he always will sustain the weak, the weary and the afflicted, who cast their burdens upon him. I may add,

4. THAT God has promised to afford all proper support and relief to those, who come to him with their cares and burdens, and place an unshaken confidence in his faithfulness. This is promised in the text. "Cast thy burdens upon the Lord, and he *shall* sustain thee." The prophet says, thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee : because he trusted in thee." The apostle James says, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." And the apostle Peter says, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time : casting all your care upon him ; for he careth for you." There is a multitude of similar promises, scattered all over the Bible. These particular promises are made upon particular conditions, and whenever the conditions are performed, the promises will certainly be performed. If the bereaved and afflicted only comply with the duty God has enjoined on them in particular, it is certain they shall find divine consolation and support. The faithfulness of God never did, and never can fail : "hath he said, and shall he not do it?" Indeed, a firm faith in the divine promises is one of the means, by which God immediately comforts and supports those who trust in him and cast their burdens upon him. Hence it

is absolutely certain, that if the bereaved and burdened perform the condition in the text, they shall eventually be sustained and comforted.



### IMPROVEMENT.

1. IF God will sustain those who cast their burdens upon him ; then burdens may become the means of great good. Men are naturally prone in prosperity, to forget and forsake God ; to imagine they are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing ; to trust in thir own hearts and lean to their own understanding ; and to say unto God, depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. While they are in such a state of self-sufficiency and independence, they are deaf to the calls, and warnings, and admonitions of the word and providence of God, and stand exposed to all the snares and temptations of this present evil world. There is nothing ; therefore better adapted to prevent these fatal effects of prosperity, than adversity, which is calculated to make men feel the necessity and importance of returning to God, from whom they have unwisely and sinfully departed. And though bereavments, and afflictions of every kind, are marks of divine displeasure, yet they are the means which God often uses, to promote the spiritual and eternal good of the children of men. By laying heavy burdens upon sinners he has, in a great many instances, prepared them for his special grace. And by laying heavy burdens upon his own children he has often promoted their spiritual benefit and growth in grace. Indeed the Apostle tells us that he treats all his children in this manner, to express his tender regard for their highest welfare. “ Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons : for what son is he whom the

father chasteneth not? Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, who corrected us, and we gave them reverence, shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but he, for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby." Afflictions always produce these salutary effects, when they bring the children of God, to feel their dependence upon him, and to cast themselves upon his mercy. And hence they have often seen and acknowledged the goodness of God to them, in calling them to endure afflictions and fiery trials. David says, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." And again he says, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray: but now have I kept thy word." When afflictions make good men feel their dependence upon God, and bring them to stay themselves upon him, they ought to consider them as the fruits of his fatherly love.

2. IF GOD will sustain those who cast their burdens upon him; then the greatest burdens may become the most beneficial. The greatest burdens have the greatest tendency to draw men to God, and make them feel the necessity of looking to him for support and relief. None will go to God for support, so long as they feel able to support themselves. And they commonly feel sufficient to endure light and momentary afflictions, and therefore despise such chastenings of the Lord. But when he lays his hand heavy upon them, and takes away a friend or relative, in whom their hearts were bound up; or calls them to suffer any other heavy and distressing calamity, then they feel their own weakness, and are ready to cry to God for his help in a day of trouble. And if they really cast themselves upon his mercy, they are capable of receiving light, and strength,

comfort, in proportion to the weight and magnitude of their afflictions. "God giveth power to the faint ; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." It is only when men are weak, that they can be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. The best of men in their lowest state, have frequently found the highest enjoyment in God. When Job was totally stripped of earthly comforts, and lay prostrate under the heaviest load of calamities, he cast his burdens upon the Lord, and found occasion to bless him for his frowns as well as for his smiles. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord." And David went to God, under a sense of his weakness, and cast his burdens upon him, in full confidence of obtaining all needful support and consolation. "O my God, my soul is cast down within me : therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites from the hill Mizar. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water spouts : all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." God has promised to those, who cast their burdens upon him, "that as their day is, so their strength shall be." And many christians, at this day, have experienced the faithfulness of God, in fulfilling this promise. They have found heavy burdens lighter to carry, than light ones, and enjoyed more of God in the lowest state of adversity, than in the highest state of prosperity. It is, therefore, a consoling truth to the sorely afflicted, that the more their troubles increase and the longer they continue, the greater peace and consolation they may enjoy in God.

5. IF God will sustain those who cast their burdens upon him ; then the afflicted never have any reason to murmur or complain under the burdens, which are laid upon them. This, however, is a complaining world, and all mankind are

extremely prone to murmur under the afflicting hand of providence. Cain complained, that his punishment was greater than he could bear. The patriarch Jacob, when he supposed he was bereaved of one and of another of his favorite children, indulged and expressed hard and unbecoming thoughts of God. The children of Israel, while under the peculiar care and direction of the God of their fathers, spent and lost their lives, by murmuring in the wilderness. And when the same people were carried into the land of their enemies, they became still more impatient, and boldly complained, that the ways of God were not equal. The afflicted are always in danger of complaining. But they never have any just ground of complaint. "Why should a living man complain?" None ever have endured greater evils or calamities, than they have deserved at the hands of God. Besides, God always stands ready to support and relieve them, if they will only become reconciled to him, and cast their cares and burdens upon him. Their complaints only serve to hide God's face from them, and justly provoke him to continue and increase their burdens. While they fight against God, they have abundant reason to expect, that he will add affliction to affliction, until they are either relieved or destroyed. They ought to remember therefore that none ever hardened themselves against God and prospered.

4. If God will sustain those who cast their burdens upon him; then the afflicted never ought to faint and sink under the weight of their burdens. There is a strong propensity in mankind, first to despise the chastening of the Lord, next to complain of it, and finally to become faint and weary of his corrections. Light troubles they despise, and overlook the hand of God in them. Heavy afflictions they are constrained to ascribe to God, and while they cannot but feel the weight of his hand, their hearts naturally rise in opposition to his wise and holy dispensations. But after they have despised and opposed God in his providence, and found no relief, they then naturally sink under the rod, and despair of relief. But what

occasion have any to faint and sink under their burdens, while God is both able and willing to sustain them, if they will only cast their burdens upon him, and take hold of his strength? It would be very unreasonable in a child to faint under a burden, which his parent had laid upon him, if he might be assisted and supported any moment, if he would only apply to his father for relief. And it is no less unreasonable and undutiful in a child of God, to faint and sink under his afflictions, while his heavenly Father is constantly saying to him, "Cast thy burden upon me, and I will sustain thee." Hence God forbids every one of his children to faint in the day of adversity. "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his corrections: nor, as the Apostle expresses it, faint when thou art rebuked of him." The afflicted cannot faint and sink under the heaviest burdens, without distrusting and displeasing God. When Eljah sunk into gloom and despondence, God rebuked him for his conduct. And God is always displeased with the afflicted, when in stead of casting their burdens upon him, and deriving from it the light and comfort which he is ready to afford them, they give up themselves to grief and despair, through an evil heart of unbelief.

5. If the afflicted ought to cast their burdens upon the Lord; then it highly concerns them to call upon his name. Prayer is the proper way of unbosoming themselves to God, of making known their wants and desires to him, and of casting their cares upon him. Hence he expressly enjoins this duty upon them. "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." And the apostle James says to christians, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray." David tells us in the contest, that he resolved to call upon God, with full confidence, that he would hear and relieve him. "As for me, I will call upon God: and the Lord will save me. Evening and morning and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear me." David's

confidence arose from his experience ; he had often prayed and been heard in times of trouble. He relates a striking instance of this kind, in the hundred and sixteenth psalm. "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me : I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord ; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. I was brought low, and he helped me." When the afflicted are truly resigned to the will of God, they are prepared to draw near to him, and to ask for the supports and consolations of his spirit. They have the spirit of grace and supplication, and find a pleasure in giving themselves unto prayer. Jacob wrestled with God, in his troubles, and prevailed ; and God has never said to the seed of Jacob seek ye me in vain. The afflicted, above all men, ought to pray without ceasing, without doubting, and without fainting. Let the experience and exhortation of the Psalmist excite them to constancy and perseverance in effectual, fervent prayer. "*I had fainted*, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart : wait I say on the Lord."

Now, may these things make a due impression upon the minds of all, who have been smitten of God and afflicted. This number is undoubtedly large ; for few, if any, have entirely escaped the rod of his wrath. Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. This life is one continued scene of trial to all the children of men, from the cradle to the grave. But there is One here present, whose wounds are bleeding, and whose tears are flowing. She has, in the course of the last week, suddenly and unexpectedly lost the object, which lay the nearest to her heart, and which was the firmest foundation of her earthly hopes and prospects. Though Doctor EVERETT had a slender constitution, and usually enjoyed but a small share of health ; yet the morning before he died, there

were no visible nor sensible symptoms of the near approach of death. Neither he, nor his friends, had the least apprehension of the danger he was in, but a few hours before he breathed his last. God hath poured a full and bitter cup of the worm-wood and the gall to the disconsolate Widow. He has bereaved her of her husband in the midst of his days, without allowing either her or him the desirable opportunity of preparing their minds for the parting stroke. This painful circumstance, while it increases her burden, diminishes her fortitude and strength, to support it. She may, with more than common propriety cry, "Pity me, pity me, O my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me." But let her seriously consider, that her bereavement, with all its aggravating circumstances, was ordered by him who cannot err, and who doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. The Judge of all the earth has, in this as well as in every other instance of his conduct towards her, done right. Let her not murmur and repine, but cheerfully submit to the sovereign will of God. Let her commit herself and her fatherless children into his holy and gracious hand. He has promised to be the father of the fatherless, and the widow's God. If she will only cast her burdens upon him, he will sustain her, and make this light affliction, which is but for a moment, work for her a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.







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